

## **Warwick Community Outreach Educational Committee**

### **Minutes for June 1, 2016**

Members Present: Karen Bachus (co-chair), Susan Baker, Nathan Cornell (co-chair), June Marchant (arrived at 7:25 pm), Darlene Netcoh (clerk), Michael Pierce, Anthony Sinapi, Donna Travis

- I. Call to Order:** Nathan Cornell officially called the meeting to order at 6:09 pm.
- II. Vote to Approve Minutes:** The committee voted to approve the minutes of May 5, 2016. Karen Bachus, Susan Baker, and Donna Travis abstained because they had not been present on May 5.
- III. Discussion: Review of Topics Discussed at Previous Meeting.** The committee reviewed the issues, particularly the concerns of the Student Advisory Committee and the ongoing special education matters.
- IV. Discussion: Warwick Students' Advisory Committee Report.** There was no report. The next meeting is in July.
- V. Discussion: Special Education Update**
  - A.** Anthony Sinapi reported that RIDE is bowing out, but they are willing to help out with a conversation between all the parties. RIDE says that they cannot investigate because of federal law. Mr. Sinapi said that he is pretty sure that they are wrong. RIDE will coordinate and host a meeting. They are taking a backseat role. They did not cite any specific law. They want us to proceed.
  - B.** Darlene Netcoh said that we are not equipped to conduct an investigation.
  - C.** Mr. Sinapi said that we can take the role of organizing. Many people have complaints.
  - D.** Mr. Cornell said that we need to let people know that they can bring complaints forward. There was supposed to be a public hearing.
  - E.** Michael Pierce said that we talked about this situation last time. The role of this committee is to give people a place to voice concerns. This issue came forward because everybody could speak together. We can gather information. People now realize that there is a problem.
  - F.** Mr. Sinapi said that he is going to draft a letter.
- VI. Discussion: Consolidation Update**
  - A.** Mr. Pierce said that he honestly hopes everything is going "superdidoopity well," but when the public sees the school committee holding a 7:00 am meeting and making budget decisions, there is an appearance issue. In ten minutes the school committee approved contracts to improve the auditoriums and lobby areas of two buildings, and what they approved was a huge difference from what they had budgeted. They went from \$75,000 to \$300,000 and from \$95,000 to \$1 million. The bigger issue is that they haven't contracted for the heating system at Vets.
  - B.** Ms. Bachus said that the school committee had approved the heating system contract in April.
  - C.** Mr. Cornell said that the superintendent said that they were waiting for RIDE.
  - D.** Ms. Bachus said that it depends on housing money.
  - E.** Mr. Pierce said that the heating system needs to get done.
  - F.** Ms. Bachus said that the auditoriums can wait.
  - G.** Ms. Netcoh mentioned problems with scheduling. The administration has people who don't know scheduling involved with scheduling. The principals and people who are usually involved with scheduling, such as guidance department chairs, have been locked out. They are ignoring the one person who truly knows scheduling. They don't want to take his advice to schedule the "appropriate" number of classes and the "appropriate" number of teachers.
  - H.** Mr. Sinapi said that he heard that classrooms are currently moving. At Pilgrim special education students had to change classrooms in the middle of senior projects.

- I.** Ms. Netcoh explained what happened at Toll Gate. There has been a domino effect. The marine trades program moved from Vets and into two art and technology classrooms at TG. The art and technology department then reclaimed two classrooms that had been subdivided years ago for special education teachers to hold resource. This move displaced seven special education teachers. Most of those teachers were moved to the classroom that had the transition program for eighteen to twenty-one year old students. Those students then were moved to a windowless room next to the automotive program at the career center.
- J.** A member of the public mentioned that the transition program at Pilgrim was moved into the “Annex,” a building outside the rest of Pilgrim. She said that there is mold in that building. She also said that they will be using a closet at Pilgrim for a classroom for a Physics II class.
- K.** Another member of the public said that the music program at Vets will be affected because seventh and eighth-grade students will be mixed in the same class. The GSEs (Grade Span Expectations) are divided by grade. The speaker added that in December Terri Medeiros, a member of the school committee, “spent ten minutes in a tirade and lambasted a parent who questioned the parity between Vets and Winman.” He is concerned because this year the band and strings at Aldrich and Gorton were scheduled together, which is like “teaching Italian and Spanish together.” He said, “How do I write my SLOs?”
- L.** There was a discussion about the problems with differentiated instruction. The material is homogeneous, but the grouping is heterogeneous.
- M.** Mr. Pierce said, “It makes it easier to schedule if you put everything together.”
- N.** Ms. Bachus said that there is a concern that Winman and Toll Gate will be the “haves” and the other half of the city the “have nots.”
- O.** Mr. Pierce said that parents of tiny seventh-graders don’t want them in the same class as eighth-graders.
- P.** Regarding the consolidation committees, Donna Travis said that she talked to Dr. Thornton and that he said that people should be on any committee that they wanted to be on. He said to give him a list and he will put them on committees.
- Q.** There was a discussion about the belief that the school department doesn’t seem to have a system and that there will probably be trailers to provide extra classroom space at Pilgrim. Another issue is the increased cost of busing. There are a number of problems with this whole process.
- R.** Mr. Pierce said that when Chicago consolidated schools there was a binder and a plan for every single school.
- S.** Mr. Cornell said that he heard that the elementary consolidation committee will make recommendations in September.
- T.** Ms. Bachus said that she is concerned about closing schools and leaving them a mess.
- U.** Ms. Netcoh said that the district is wasting money on the “fitness centers” and “collaborative work stations” (tables) at the junior highs.
- V.** Mr. Sinapi said that there doesn’t seem to be a plan.
- W.** A member of the public stated that she has a Master’s Degree in forensic accounting and that she is seeing a lot of “red flags.” She wanted to know what entity controls the budget.
- X.** Mr. Pierce said that the school committee approved a budget that did not have all of the vice principals in it.
- Y.** Mrs. Travis said that she sat in a room with the mayor, the school department’s finance director, and the former superintendent, and “reamed him for turning in five different budgets.”

- Z.** The member of the public with the accounting degree said that she works for a multi-billion dollar company. Her company can get fined if they do not have good numbers. There needs to be evidence.
- AA.** Mr. Sinapi said that this behavior in the school department is nothing new. He has had his own experience with the school department.
- BB.** The member of the public said that there needs to be at least three different quotes from three different vendors.
- CC.** Ms. Bachus said that the school committee had a meeting at 7:00 am. The bids were sent out twice to the same companies—to different people in those companies.
- DD.** Mrs. Travis said that the city council can only vote on the whole budget.
- EE.** The member of the public said that she fears that money is being wasted.
- FF.** Mr. Pierce wondered if they are “particularly blockheaded enough to put air conditioning in Gorton this summer,” because Gorton is going to be the new administration building.
- GG.** Ms. Netcoh wanted to know if the city council could vote for a forensic audit of the school department.
- HH.** Ms. Bachus said that the school department is currently doing a forensic audit of buildings and grounds.
- II.** Mr. Pierce said, “I have one other question—is the mayor aware of the coming implosion?”
- JJ.** Ms. Bachus said that the superintendent speaks with the mayor every day.
- VII. Public Comment/Information and Proposals from Committee Members**
  - A.** A member of the public commented about the students who had to move into new classrooms, because his daughter was one of those students. He said that they did not know about the move until a day or two before, and moving day was a very bad day for his daughter. When he asked why it had to happen, everyone started pointing fingers. He spoke with other parents. There is no nurse in the career center. There is no working phone in the new room. Some students need to have a nurse available.
  - B.** Ms. Netcoh mentioned that the agenda for the Monday morning 7:00 am school committee meeting was posted on the Friday before the meeting. The agenda states that people requiring an interpreter must give notice of three business days. How can the public give three days’ notice between a Friday afternoon and a Monday morning?
  - C.** Mr. Pierce said, “Wouldn’t it be great if the school committee could meet with small groups of teachers?”
  - D.** Mr. Sinapi said that everything went great at the meeting in the cafeteria when everyone could talk.
- VIII. Next Meeting:** TBD due to the Fourth of July
- IX. Adjournment:** 8:09 pm